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OR,

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RELIGION AND MORALITY ARE THE BASIS OF HUMAN FELICITY.

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THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL.

(Continued from page 68.)

HAVING noticed, in the last number, some of the leading sentiments Paul embraced, after his conversion we are now to consider the part which he acted.

WHEN God is about to effect an important design, by human means, he raises up instruments and endows them with gifts suited to the sphere in which they are to move. Accordingly, as the Apostle Paul was to perform a part of higher responsibility, than was ever entrusted to any other man, it pleased God to furnish him with every adequate ability. In this Apostle, there was a union of whatever could exalt the human character. To the gifts of nature were added the still richer gifts of grace. Exalted to the Apostleship and commissioned by Christ, he enters the field of labor with the tenderest concern for God's glory and the souls of men.

As to the time of his commencing his work, there is some disagreement among the learned. Dr. Wells and others, suppose he did not preach Christ in Damascus, immediately after his conversion; but that he went first into Arabia, where he resided for some time; that afterwards he returned and straightway preached Christ, as expressed in ACTS 9. 19. There are others of equal authority, who think differently; that from the spot where he was savingly enlightened, and received commission from Christ, he instantly entered into the city, and preached in his name. The former opinion is founded on GAL. 1. 17. That the Apostle went to Arabia and afterward returned to Damascus is certain, but from this circumstance, it will not follow, that he did not first preach at Damascus. He might have commenced his work here, then gone into Arabia, and afterwards returned and preached a second time in this city. This is by far the most probable on the whole; though we do not conceive it very material, as respects our present object.

IT will readily be perceived, that to be an Apostle to the Gentiles, considering the nature of the religion to be propagated, and the state of the nations at that time, must have been a peculiarly arduous and difficult task. The cities and regions which Paul visited, had not only every thing to learn respecting religion, but they had much to unlearn.

AFTER the Roman Empire had

subjugated the nations round about to her control, and a general peace was established, philosophical schools were erected, which were crouded by young men in quest of science. In these schools the most absurd opinions were industriously disseminated, and as eagerly embraced. Though these systems were multiform, yet they were all opposed to the religion of Christ. With this vain philosophy had the Apostle to combat. The pillars of the false building must be torn away, before there could be room for a better edifice in its stead. "But with weapons which are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds," the Apostle could do all things, and with these weapons he met an opposing world.

To have a correct idea of the part which Paul acted, it is important to consider, that he was in heart and life under the influence of the religion, he inculcated. God had imparted to him an uncommon measure of grace, and in his life and actions, there was nothing impeachable. The interests of the Redeemer were uppermost in his heart and the worth of souls had such sway over him, as to overcome every sinister consideration. He had a sense of the presence of that Saviour from whom he had received commission, and by this Saviour was he invigorated with all those supplies of grace, which raised him above fear, and rendered his work delightful. Opposition the most threatening instead of checking his zeal for God, only served to draw forth his more ardent endeavors for his glory. His heart was in his work, and he met every part of it with invincible fortitude.—There is no accounting for the part which Paul acted, only that he was actuated by the purest principles.

The instructions which the Apostle communicated, in his preaching and Epistles, were not after men, nor according to the wisdom of this world; they were in demonstration of the spirit and with power. As he was taught of God, so he preached. He kept back nothing that was profitable for the souls of men, even though he might incur hereby the censures of the world. He exposed all the springs of human guilt, arraigned the sinner at the bar of justice that he might see his perishing need of an Almighty Deliverer. As he had been once blind to his own heart, he sought by the means of gospel truth to undeceive a thoughtless world who were secure in a place of the greatest hazard. He exhibited the divine law and addressed truth directly to the conscience. The Apostle knew how to adapt truth to men in every situation. He pointed the wounded in spirit to a bleeding Savior, and held out promises to the humble soul. For the saints he manifested the most ardent affection, and his care of the churches was unremitted.

As the Apostle Paul was commissioned more especially to go among the Gentiles, his field of labor was extensive. He travelled through most of the provinces of the Roman Empire. In many of these he erected churches, which he repeatedly visited, and over which he watched with all the tenderness of a father. His success was truly astonishing. But though a most highly favored and honored instrument under God, he was not elated with himself. Paul was a remarkable instance of humility. No man was farther from self-conceit." He was disposed to deem

others better than himself. His example gives the sharpest reproof to all enthusiasts, and such as are disposed to eulogize their own attainments. Once was he caught up to the third heavens. But how, and when does he speak of the event? He makes mention of it with the utmost modesty, and from nothing which appears did he ever divulge it, till fourteen years had elapsed. And even then the disclosure was made necessary by evil minded people, who were endeavoring to asperse his character.

From the time of Paul's conversion to the period of his death was about thirty-three years. In the 25th year of his ministry he was carried a prisoner to Rome. Here he resided for two years and was discharged without being brought to trial. After he was released from his bonds, he entered again into his former field of labor. Continuing about six years more in strengthening and animating the churches, he returns again to Rome in the 13th year of Nero, when he was apprehended, in the persecution which raged at that time. This cruel and blood thirsty tyrant had set fire to the city, then charged the crime to Christians, for which he commenced the bitterest persecutions against them. Here was Paul beheaded, and buried in *Via Ostiensis* about two miles from Rome.

Truly may it be said, never did the Apostle shine brighter, than when in view of the fatal hour. He says, "I am ready to be offered." He does not fear death even in the most dreadful form. He is able to say, "I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Thus we have a concise view of this illustrious character; a character in comparison with which the mighty conquerors of the earth are contemptible, a character which the very vilest are under the necessity of revering, and which will be holden in remembrance to the honor of Christ and his religion, as long as the sun and the moon shall endure.

In glancing at the character of the Apostle Paul, which has been delineated in a series of numbers, the mind can hardly escape being forcibly struck with a number of very interesting truths.

The doctrine of total depravity is established beyond all question, as manifested in the life of Paul before his conversion. Had he possessed a spark of real holiness of heart, he never would have taken such an active part against the followers of the Redeemer. The conduct of Paul clearly proved that he had not the least degree of right affection of heart towards God, previously to his being renewed. He was inveterate to the Christian name, and exhibited a temper perfectly co-incident with the description which he himself afterwards gave of the sinfulness of the natural man. Paul acted out an entire wicked heart. And in view of his state and character before his conversion, we may know ourselves to be by nature total enemies to God. Paul did not feel that he was an enemy to his maker when he was persecuting, but he afterwards felt it most sensibly. Being insensible of our opposition to God, is no argument we are destitute of such opposition. We shall never judge correctly of ourselves, so long as we are ignorant of the state of the heart in relation to the divine law. If we measure our characters by a human law, and judge of merit and demerit accordingly as we come up to

this standard, we shall greatly err. The divne law is the only true measure of our moral character. From the life of Paul we may know, that regeneration is absolutely essential to salvation. It is not enough that we acknowledge Christ as a moralist, and say that religion is a good thing; it is not enough that we have some partial conviction, and make some faint resolutions about our future life, we must be subjects of God's renewing and special grace. If Paul, before he could be a christian, must experience a change of heart, so must every man. It is true, Paul's conversion was attended with circumstances we are not to expect. Christ appeared in person miraculously to him, and addressed him with an audible voice. This was necessary, as Paul was to be an Apostle of Christ. But let us feel that a change of the same nature is as needful for us, as it was for him.

From the life of Paul it appears that salvation is wholly of grace. And this accords with the whole tenor of the Bible. "Who hath made thee to differ, and what hast thou, that thou hast not received."

In view of this character let us examine ourselves and rest in no attainment, which shall not give us fortitude and strong consolation in the day of Christ's appearing.

It is the character of the evil speaker under the mask of esteem, and the flattering expression of friendship to convey the keen invectives of slander. A crime of so black a die, that were I to expose all its deformity, you would no longer apply it to yourselves; yet it is the bond of union in almost all our assemblies, it finds its way even into the society of christians, and none can say, I have preserved my lips free from guile.—Now what are the pretexts which in your eyes palliate the vice of evil speakings---is it the lightness of the faults you censure?—You do not mean to wound your brother or tarnish his reputation, but innocently to divert yourselves with faults which do not dishonor him in the eyes of the world: you, my dear reader, do this to divert yourself with his faults —cruel pleasure, which carries sorrow and bitterness to his heart. Where is the innocency of an amusement whose source springs from vices which ought to inspire you with compassion and grief. If Jesus Christ in the gospel, forbid us to invigorate the langours of conversation with idle words, shall it be more permitted you to enliven it by derisions and censures. If he who call his brother fool be in danger of hell fire; of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy who renders him the laughingstock of a whole assembly?—Is it then necessary your brother should suffer to amuse you? Can you find no delight in conversation which wound not his fame?—Go to the source and examine your reasons—perhaps you indulge some secret jealousy, his reputation is greater than yours —he stands in your way—had he fewer of those qualities which exalt him above you—would you experience such pleasure in exposing his faults? Are there not reasons for your conduct still more mean?—It is not your wish to excuse your own faults by making your brother's public—But after all, you do not feel yourselves guilty of these evil motives, you only speak of his faults through indiscretion and levity.—But does that render you more innocent? Levity and indiscretion, so unworthy the gravity of a christian, so often condemned in the gospel,

can it justify another evil? What matter it to the brother you stab, whether it be done through indiscretion or malice? Does an arrow unwillingly drawn make a less dangerous or slighter wound, than if sent on purpose? Does all religion consist in charity? Do you love your brother as you do yourself? Do you ever ridicule your own faults through indiscretion? If it ever happen that you speak of them, is it notwith palliation which entirely excuses them? Perhaps the person you censure is of that sex, whom not to praise is unbecoming, whose modesty ought to be more conspicuous than the ornaments they wear; and whose reputation is wounded by the slightest breath of calumny. Perhaps it is a person consecrated to God and established in the church whom you censure, who, engaged by the sanctity of his vocation to more pure and exemplary manners, finds himself dishonored by censure which would not affect the reputation of the persons of the world. The Lord curseth those who meddle with his children, "who toucheth you, toucheth the apple of my eye;" nevertheless the world think themselves priviledged to censure the failings of the christian, if not in public they will whisper it to a few friends, they in their turn whisper it, and after a while it bursts forth like a fire, which was but a spark at first, but by gathering fresh fuel from every quarter, carries destruction in its course. Can you repair the injury? No, and perhaps the scandal was some malicious fancy at first, and passing through so many mouths is so altered, you no longer recognize it as your own, yet you are the guilty person, the sins of a whole people are yours, and you have done what you could to persuade the world that all those who appear to be good when narrowly examined, are like the rest of the world, and that real goodness does not exist. It is true our conversation is not always such as it ought to be. We hold out to the world examples of pride, of negligence, of cunning, of prejudice, which our dearest friends are afraid to hint to us; and of looking at those pleasures with a pleased countenance which our profession forbids us to practice; sins against which we should struggle, and it is difficult for the world to honor a character we ourselves disgrace, but this ought to be the subject of your prayers, of your tears. The most dreadful scourge with which God afflicts a people is in not raising up faithful children for whose sake he will preserve a land. Shall we then take pleasure in exposing those faults which for our own sakes, we ought to wish annihilation. Ah, my brethren, the just on the earth are like holy arks in the midst of which the Lord dwelleth, they may stagger in their walk, for the purest virtue has its spots, but the Lord is incenced, when impure hands like those of Uzzah, shall venture to set them right, and altho' he does not strike them with immediate death, he marks on their foreheads the stamp of his disapprobation: perhaps of reprobation. Such is the allusion of the pretext which you draw from the lightness of your scandals, the motives are never innocent; the circumstances always criminal; the consequences irreparable. *Massillon.*

A NOTORIOUS robber in the South part of Scotland, called John of the Store, who for many years having driven that woeful trade, did one day rencounter a poor man travelling with two horses, which according to his custom he took away. The poor countryman fall-

ing down on his knees, did earnestly beg, that for Jesus Christ's sake he would return him one again, for he had no other means of supporting his poor family, but what he could gain by them; but it was in vain. He took them home leaving the poor man in that desolate condition: but soon after, he became melancholy, could get no rest or quiet, not knowing the cause, but as he professed those words which the poor man had spoke to him (though he was such an ignorant Atheist, he understood not what the poor man meant when he spoke of Christ) were lying like a heavy weight upon his spirits, and whilst he was sought after for his robberies, he desired his son to keep out of the way; for he could not, there being a restraint upon him, and something within him that in a sort, bound him from going out of the way. Accordingly he was apprehended and brought to Edinburgh, put in prison and condemned to die. Upon which a Godly Minister, Mr. Henry Blyth, with a Christian gentleman, William Cunningham, made him a visit, holding forth his miserable state and the hazard of his soul, exhorted him to fly to Jesus Christ, he suddenly broke out, O what word is that! for it hath been my death: That is the word which hath lain upon my heart, since the poor man spoke it to me; so I had no power from that time to go out of the way. And after being told who Jesus Christ was, without whom he could not be saved, he cried: O will he ever look on me! and shew mercy to one that for his sake would not shew mercy to the poor man and give him back his horse! but after further instruction, he manifested a most real and gracious change; he gave most convincing evidence of the reality thereof, attained to great assurance, and before his death and upon the scaffold, in the public streets where he was executed, he spake so wonderfully of the Lord's dealings with him, with such knowledge and judgment, as left a conviction on all present, and forced them to see a truth, a reality in the grace of God.

Fleming, on the Scriptures.

Proof of the truth of Christianity from its manifest superiority to the highest productions of Human wisdom.

Christianity is not satisfied with producing merely the specious guise of virtue. She requires the substantial reality, which may stand the scrutinizing eye of that Being, "who searches the heart." Meaning therefore that the christian should live and breath in the atmosphere, as it were, of benevolence; she forbids whatever may tend to obstruct its diffusion, or vitiate its purity. It is on this principle, that emulation is forbidden; for besides that this passion almost always degenerates into envy, and that it derives its origin chiefly from pride, and a desire of self exaltation. How can we easily love our neighbour as ourselves, if we consider him at the same time as our rival, and are intent upon surpassing him in the pursuit of whatever is the subject of competition?

Christianity again teaches us not to set our hearts on worldly possessions and earthly honours; and thereby provides for our really loving, or even cordially forgiving those, who have been more successful than ourselves in the attainment of them, or who have even designedly thwarted us in the pursuit.

" Let the rich," says the apostle, " rejoice in that he is brought low." How can he, who means to attempt in any degree to obey this precept, be irreconcileable towards any who may have been instrumental in his depression?

CHRISTIANITY also teaches us not to prize human estimation at a very high rate; and thereby provides for the practice of her injunction, to love from the heart those, who justly, or unjustly, may have attacked our reputation, or injured our character. She commands not the show, but the reality of meekness and gentleness; and by thus taking away the aliment of anger, and the fomenter of discord, she provides for the maintenance of peace, and the restoration of good temper among men, when it may have sustained a temporary interruption.

IT is another capital excellence of christianity, that she values moral attainments at a far higher rate than intellectual acquisitions, and proposes to conduct her followers to the heights of virtue, rather than of knowledge. On the contrary, most of the false religious systems, which have prevailed in the world, have proposed to reward the labor of their votary, by drawing aside the veil which concealed from the vulgar eye their hidden mysteries, and by introducing him to the knowledge of their deeper and hidden mysteries.

THIS is eminently the case in the Hindoo, and in the Mahometan religion, in that of China, and, for the most part, in the various modifications of ancient paganism. On systems which proceed on this principle, it is obvious that the bulk of mankind can never make any great proficiency. There was accordingly among the nations of antiquity, one system, whatever it was, for the learned, and another for the illiterate. Many of the philosophers spoke out, and professed to keep the lower orders in ignorance, for the general good; plainly suggesting that the bulk of mankind was to be considered as almost of an inferior species. Aristotle himself countenanced this opinion. An opposite mode of proceeding naturally belongs to christianity, which without distinction, professes an equal regard for all human beings, and which was characterized by its first promulgator, as the messenger of " Glad tidings to the poor."

Wilberforce's Practical View.

On God's Omnipresence.

Great God thy presence fills all space,
From thee I cannot flee,
Where'er I look I see thy face
Forever fix'd on me.

If I ascend to heaven above,
I see thee on thy throne,
Angelic armies fill'd with love
Thee as their sov'reign own.

Low at thy feet they cast their crowns,
And faces veil with wings,
Thy name on ev'ry harp resounds
Thro' all the trembling strings.

Adoring saints around the stand,
And see thy blissful face,
With joy each happy heart expands
And sings redeeming grace.

If I descend to hell below
And view that flood of fire,
Where devils roll in endless woe.
Beneath thy dreadful ire.

Thine awful pow'r is there display'd,
Thy justice there is seen,
And mercy in bright robes array'd,
Can never intervene.

If mounted on the morning wing,
The wat'ry world I trace,
That awful hand whose pow'r I sing,
Would guide me through the race.

Should I beneath the midnight shade,
Attempt my crimes to veil,
A blase of light would soon pervade,
And all my thoughts reveal.

The sun whose genial fires are shed,
On worlds which round him roll,
Proclaims the hand that first him made,
And now supports the whole.

The moon that shines with borrow'd light,
And sheds her beams below,
The stars that twinkle in the night,
Thy pow'r and glory show.

Where'er I turn my wandering eye,
Thy power and wisdom shine,
Each work proclaims a God is nigh,
Whose hand is all divine.

The meadows dress'd in rich array,
The fields in cheerful green,
The corn its spreading spires display,
A hand that is unseen.

I see thee in the waving trees,
And in the op'ning glade,
I meet thee in the cooling breeze,
And in the woodland shade.

The summer cloud whose copious shower,
Refresh the thirsty land,
Proclaims a great Almighty power,
Who formed it with his hand.

When with thy saints thy courts I tread,
And act the sacred part,
Thine ear hears ev'ry word that's said,
Thine eye views ev'ry heart.

Which way I walk, which way I tread,
I'm open to thine eye,
When I lie slumbering on my bed,
Thou Lord art ever nigh.

My thoughts before they are my own,
Are naked in thy sight,
Thine eye beholds them from thy throne,
And will them bring to light.

When Christ his awful seat shall fill,
And worlds before him stand,
My secret thoughts he will reveal,
To all th' assembled band.

Since I am open to the sight
Of thy all-piercing eye,
Since thou wilt judge my heart aright,
And all my actions try.

O may I ever see thy hand,
And ever view thee near,
And when I wake or sleep or stand,
Remember GOD IS HERE.

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